The House then adjourned at ten minutes past eleven of the clock till two of the clock.

The House reassembled after lunch at one minute past two of the clock, MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Newspaper Report on Air Strike Delay Cost Lives : Kargil Report

श्री सभापति : श्री प्रणब मुखर्जी।

श्री संजय निरुपम (महाराष्ट्र) : सभापति जी, हमने आपको एक नोटिस दिया है। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापति : मैंने आपका नोटिस देख लिया है। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SURESH PACHOURI): Is he speaking with your permission, Sir?

श्री सभापति : मेरी सुन लीजिए। ...**(व्यवधान)**... बात तो सुनिए। मैंने आपका नोटिस देख लिया है। इस पर कल निर्णय करूंगा। ...**(व्यवधान)**... आपका भी आया है, दोनों का ...**(व्यवधान)**...

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): Sir, with your permission, I beg to lay a statement under Rule 372 ...*(Interruptions)*... I am sorry, that is the rule of the Lok Sabha ...*(Interruptions)*... I have yet to become accustomed.

श्री सभापति : प्रणब बाबू, अगर आपको दिक्कत आ रही है तो आप यहां से बोल लीजिए। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री मोती लाल वोरा (छत्तीसगढ़) : यह हमको मंजूर नहीं है। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, with your permission, I beg to lay a statement on The Hindustan Times report dated 6th June, 2004, with the heading "Air Strike Delay Cost Lives: Kargil Report".

My attention has been drawn to the article published in the Hindustan Times which suggests that for lack of decisive action by the then political leadership, there was a loss of 474 men to the Indian Army and this also allowed Pakistan to wrest the initial advantage. The facts of the case are detailed below.

On 3rd May, 1999, the first information about an intrusion having taken place in Kargil came to the knowledge of the Army Authorities. Between 25th May, 1999 and 26th July, 1999, the CCS was briefed on the various developments that were taking place. On the 26th of July, 1999, the Kargil operations were formally declared as over.

As with every war, so too with Kargil, the Indian Army in September, 2000, prepared a 6 volume classified report to record the events and analyse the success and failures, shortcomings and strengths of the warlike situation in Kargil. The preparation of an abridged version of this report was taken up in July, 2003 and completed in January, 2004. This report is prepared for the purpose of campaign study in promotion examinations. As these are documents prepared for internal use for training purposes, the Ministry of Defence has not been involved in any way with the preparation of these reports.

This in-house report mentions the fact that despite Army asking for the employment of air power from 8th May, 1999, the CCS gave approval for the same on the 25th May, 1999. During this period, the Chief of Air Staff was taking the view that Air power at those heights could not be properly utilised as helicopters would be extremely vulnerable and there would be danger of escalation of the conflict. His view was that before committing Air power, political clearance should be obtained which was finally done on 25th May, 1999.

Honourable Members are aware of the circumstances in which the Kargil Review Committee, also popularly known as the Subramaniam Committee, was constituted by the then Government on 29th July, 1999. A copy of the Kargil Report is already available with the hon. Members. The then Government had constituted a Group of Ministers to examine the recommendations of the Committee as well as four other task forces that were set up to examine in-depth the recommendations of the Subramaniam Committee. The recommendations of the Group of Ministers were approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security in May, 2001 and most of the measures have already been implemented by the previous Government.

One of the questions raised in the Hindustan Times article is that the casualties of 474 could have been avoided if Air power had been used from the beginning. I wish there had been no casualties at all. However, I have been told that between 8th May and 25th May, 1999, the number of casualties were 35. From 26th May, 1999 to the end of the Kargil Operation

on 26th July, 1999, the number of casualties was 439 (including 6 Air Force officers). The total casualties are thus 474. It would be seen that the time taken for giving clearance to deploy air power was not the reason for higher casualties. After all, it was a difficult war fought from a position of disadvantage. The members of our armed forces demonstrated indomitable courage, fighting abilities, evicted the enemy and won the war.

Regarding the use of Air power, the Army had on 8th May, 1999, projected the requirement of attack helicopters for use against the enemy and also helicopters for transport of troops. This was considered between 12th and 17th May, 1999, and it was decided not to use this option as it may lead to escalation.

On 25th May, 1999, after a fuller and in-depth appreciation of the emerging situation the CCS took the decision to deploy the Indian Air Force. Finally, on 25th May, 1999, the CCS gave the go ahead for use of Air power.

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया (झारखंड) : महोदय, जिस तरह से परसों से बात चल रही है कि नेता विपक्ष कुछ बात यहां पर रख रहे थे और जिस तरह से ट्रेजरी बैंच ने रोका और बात नहीं करने दी ...**(व्यवधान)**... जब तक यह बात शांतिपूर्वक नहीं रखने दी जाती है...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापति : सुनिए-सुनिए, हो गया। ...**(व्यवधान)**... ठहरिए। माननीय सदस्य कृपया बैठें। ...**(व्यवधान)**... माननीय सदस्य बैठ जाएं।

प्रो. राम देव भंडारी (बिहार) : सर, राष्ट्रपति के अभिभाषण पर बहस कराइए। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापति : एक मिनट ठहर जाएं। ...**(व्यवधान)**... आप विपक्ष के नेता को बुलवाना चाहते हैं?

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया : विपक्ष के नेता बोलेंगे ही। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री सभापति : बोलना चाहते हैं न, तो फिर आपको प्रधान मंत्री जी को भी सुनना पड़ेगा। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री एस. एस. अहलुवालिया : नहीं, जो हमारा सवाल है उसका जवाब दें। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

प्रो. राम देव भंडारी : आप प्रधान मंत्री जी को भी नहीं सुनना चाहते। ...**(व्यवधान)**...